English- Literature Circles Happy Fun Paper

**Me and Earl and the Dying Girl**

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“The whole *point* is that you can’t be friends with anyone”, is what Greg S. Gaines said at the beginning of “Me and Earl and the Dying Girl”. During the entire story the reader waited for this big miraculous friendship to bloom and to change Greg before he goes off to college. But the truth is, this story wasn’t about that. There *was* a transformation within Greg, but it’s not the one that the reader expected. Greg went from over-thinking his every move, to not even realizing who was around him. These are too extremes in the relationship realm but Greg’s character was written in a way that signified both. His character was screwed up in the beginning but he was also screwed up in the end- just in a different way. How Greg determined his own fate and how he had no one to blame other than himself, was discussed in the following paragraphs.

Greg started off trying to have the up and up on his high school campus. He thought that if he could just somehow be included with every group, from his school, that he was the “man”. That’s too funny for words to express. Why? Because no one wants to be friends with THAT guy. The guy willing to over-think every relationship he claims to have, just so he he can say to himself that “he did it”. Greg cared more about what people thought of him than anyone else at that high school. After reading this book, the reader may have believed Greg to be super independent and “in-tune” with himself. Or that he was just too mature for all the other teenagers at that school. No! Any one who talked about alien puke is definitely **not** “too mature”, for anything! Greg states over and over how much he thought “high school sucked” (which I’m not disagreeing with) but it’s hard to feel sympathy for someone who is making it suck for himself! If Greg didn’t care so much about what EVERY person on his campus thought of him, he might have found someone that he actually had a connection with. Even his “friend”, Earl, is not a true friend. They make movies together, that’s it. Being creative in this way should be something that is personal but Greg and Earl never once felt that. No wonder their movies sucked! I don’t know about you, but I wouldn’t be interested in watching any of the movies this book described.

With Rachel, there was never any real connection either. The readers convinced themselves—and eventually expected—Greg to make a huge proclamating gesture towards Rachel, and that the love in Greg’s heart somehow saved her. You know? The sappy, unrealistic love stuff that we are supposed to feed into as being reality. THIS book was the a realistic depiction of life. The reader kept thinking that the author would skip through all the boring details and get to the “good parts”. It’s like sometimes wishing that your life was a movie, fast forwarding to the fun times, or wanting a music sound track for your everyday situations, or hoping that someday your “spidey powers’” really will kick in when you are just too lazy to pick up the remote control. These things are never going to happen; the same way Greg was never going to understand how to be someone’s friend. It’s disappointing. Even though we don’t *want* to like the idea of a happy ending, we end up hoping it happens anyway. Why? So we can continue comparing our lives to movies and hoping that part of it is actually real. It’s been that way for years; it’s an un-collapsible concept. Greg’s character made us want to believe in him. He’s the typical underdog. He has no where to go but up and we, as readers, loved the idea of him. So it’s such a let down after the book was finished, only to find that he still doesn’t understand how to let anything meaningful happen to him. He still wouldn’t allow it. THAT is the most frustrating part because *he* chooses to be this way. So many different groups of people would have included him into their own campus clique but Greg is too busy trying to psychoanalyze everyone else that he doesn’t realize that no else cares enough about him to try and figure him out. No one ever got to see the real Greg and it’s all at his discretion.

After the whole “Rachel ordeal” that Greg deals with, the reader thought that there would be no possible way that Greg couldn’t feel something but that is exactly what happens! He goes from being included in every school group to being exclusive with Rachel. His whole “flying under the radar” persona that he tried to pull off, had been shattered. He thought he was ruined. So what did he do? Go out and find inspiration elsewhere? Learn to open up to people? Realize how cowardly he had been acting and changed his ways? NO. He went to the complete opposite side of the spectrum from where he had been! Instead of “over-caring”, he decides not to care at all. He hung out with Rachel out of obligation. Obligation to *himself*. He didn’t want to feel guilty for not consoling with her when she actually needed a friend. He selfishly fended off anyone who could ever really care about him and anyone who he could actually end up caring about too. At least when he tried to be part of every group he made *some* sort of effort—but with Rachel, he never did. He didn’t want to hear about her day, about what she was going through, about what she was passionate about. All he wanted was to go through his day and not be interupted by anyone or anything. He couldn’t even put his thoughts aside long enough to get to know her.

An argument can be made about the movie he makes for her and how that showed that Greg really did care for Rachel; but that movie was horrible. He realized this after “Rachel the Film” was shown to the entire school. He also realized that he never knew anything about the girl he spent so much time with and that the movie was more about him than about her. One of the things he says after the movie had been shown was, “…my role in the Benson ecosystem changed again, for the worse. At the beginning of the year I had been Greg Gaines, the guy who is casually friendly with everyone. Then I became Greg Gaines, Possible Boyfriend of Boring Girl. That wasn’t great; nor was Greg Gaines, Filmaker. But now I was Greg Gaines, Filmmaker Who-Specifically Makes Shitty Experimental Films and Forces You to Watch Them. I was a lone chimp, hobbling around on the forest floor.” There were so many things that were wrong with what he said but the main point was that he still only cared about himself. The poor self-image he had always possessed was now exposed to the public and he couldn’t handle it. He didn’t want to get to know anyone or let anyone know the real him, because the “real Greg” sucked.

Greg was right though… HE couldn’t be friends with anyone, that was for sure. Anyone who could spend time with someone who was dying and not feel anything about it, was incapable of being anyone’s friend. It’s times when people are needed the most that they show their true colors. As it turned out, Greg’s colors just weren’t very nice. After everything that happened to him—after everything that should have molded him into being a decent person/friend—he still couldn’t comprehend the concept of friendship. So what happened to Greg? Well, considering the type of person he was…. nobody cares.

Reflection:

In order to improve my writing I used my first essay (the interview assignment) as a guide. I paid closer attention to keeping my verb tense consistent for this essay and tried to develop my introduction, body, and conclusion paragraphs better for the purpose of the genre (a school essay). Another part of grading criteria was the 3 INs (INtroduce, INsert, and INterpret). So I needed to do that with the new information in each body paragraph. Each of these things are just to improve my writing skills and hopefully this essay is better.